Memorandum of Support

January 9, 2020

A.8094-A (Barrett)

Title:  An act requiring the division of veterans’ services to review issues relating to veterans’ abilities to access state parks, lands and facilities; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof.

Purpose: Requires the New York State Division of Veterans’ Service in consultation with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Department of Health and the Office of Mental Health to review issues relating to veterans’ abilities to access state parks, lands and facilities.

Statement of Support: Military veterans often face a gauntlet of personal and professional issues following service that is often related to post-traumatic stress, loss, separation or retirement from the military, or challenges associated with life outside of the military. Our veterans and their families return home to our communities, not to VA hospitals, and our communities have a responsibility to ensure each veteran that returns home is provided with the support they most need to make a successful transition from military service into a healthy, purposeful, and active citizenship.

The Sierra Club envisions a just, equitable, and sustainable future where all people benefit from a healthy, thriving planet and a direct connection to nature. Having access to New York public lands provides the opportunity for our veterans to experience that direct connection, benefiting from a broad spectrum of outcomes including demonstratable positive changes in sense of belonging, loneliness, and overall wellbeing. Having access to New York parks and other public lands is as much a human right as our right of access to clean air and clean water. A.8094-A will require the state division of veterans’ services to examine the known benefits of exposure to the outdoors, the effects of outdoor therapeutic programs, and to identify the barriers relating to veterans’ abilities to access state parks, lands and facilities.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Urges Your Support of A.8094-A.